

White Paper Report

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1. COVER PAGE

- Final Report
- Grant # HD-50312-08
- Virtual Burnham Initiative
- Project Directors: Davis Schneiderman, Donnie Sendelbach (through October, 2009)
- Lake Forest College
- Submission Date: April 22, 2010

2. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Project Activities

Major activities:

Lake Forest College's Virtual Burnham Initiative (VBI) takes as its central subject the 1909 *Plan of Chicago* by Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett—the most important city plan in the history of the Chicago region. Involving multiple partners, the VBI's objectives for public users were threefold: 1) to promote an historical understanding of the *Plan* and its legacy, 2) to propose the contemporary application of these ideas to local communities through new media, and 3) to activate critical engagement and critical thinking about historical study and contemporary practice. To this end, the VBI targeted a wide public audience, not only those interested in history but also young people attracted to an interactive virtual world. The user experience is calculated to result in increased familiarity with the *Plan* and a sense of how it functions as a living document for both the Chicago region and the American metropolitan experience. Thematically, the VBI creates a space for users to encounter history in a new way and recognize its significance for their communities.

Additionally, the project also incorporated a series of public programs tied to the 2009 Burnham Centennial events in the Chicago region. Numerous VBI contacts helped in the planning and research stages of the grants, including **1) cultural and public institutions:** The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago History Museum, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), The Archimedia Workshop, The Society of Architectural Historians, The Glessner House Museum, Lake Forest Foundation for Historic Preservation, and the Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Historical Society; **2) universities:** Northwestern University, the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture, the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Design at DePaul University, the University of Illinois-Chicago (through VBI Advisor John Shuler), and the University of Chicago (through VBI Advisor Rebecca Graff); and an **3) Urban Studies content creation group** consisting of educational institutions (detailed below). In-kind publicity for the VBI was provided by the Burnham Plan Centennial Committee, Metropolis 2020, and Google.

The VBI offers a thematic gateway for a wide array of constituencies to connect with the complicated legacy of the *Plan*. The VBI made its models with the free, easy-to-use, design program Google SketchUp to construct virtual buildings as we transform the flat images, maps, and drawings of the 1909 text into 3-D models uploaded to the free program Google Earth. With over 350 million download activations, Google Earth offers a widely accessible rendering of the earth, including rich geographical content such as satellite images, maps, and 3-D models, with the capacity to use layer technology to link to non-geographical content such as video, audio, image, and text. The key to the success of this grant was to use third-party storage, design, and hosting mechanisms—ensuring that the VBI materials remain accessible and easy-to-find during the legacy period.

Deployment:

1) Website: The VBI used Adobe Dreamweaver to construct a sustainable project website (vbi.lakeforest.edu) to house VBI information, materials, and relevant data about the project; including a series of short promotional videos used to advertise the project.

2) Virtual Models: As such, the VBI central component is its “virtual exhibition” via Google Earth and a host website (<http://vbi.lakeforest.edu/>). The project expanded on its original digitizing scope. We proposed *only* the virtual modeling of a modest-sized location: Chicago’s Grant Park as envisioned by the 1909 *Plan*. We are pleased to report that we not only completed modeling of the park structures and its grounds, but we also completed work on the Civic Center complex, Monroe Harbor, and several train stations. These works were bolstered by the geo-location and digitization of over 16 maps from the *Plan*, now viewable atop their contemporary locations.

In short, we have completed models for all major unbuilt elements of the *Plan*, with the exception of the proposed canal/lagoon system stretching from Jackson Park to Grant Park.

3) Community Involvement--Schools: The VBI operated as an officially recognized project of the Burnham Plan Centennial (<http://burnhamplan100.uchicago.edu/>), and was a participant in their series of lectures, brown bags, and community listing over the course of the centennial period. The project director gave numerous talks, lectures, workshops, and class visits during the project period, including as keynote for the 2009 American Planning Association Upper Midwest Conference in Chicago.

Additionally, the VBI worked closely with three school districts, on four different projects. The results of all project are available on the VBI website.

A) **Bold Ideas:** The most ambitious collaboration developed with Christine Le’s Urban Studies classroom at Waukegan High School, as a part of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s (CMAP’s) [Go To 2040 Initiative](#). This project asked students in the Waukegan High School Urban Studies course to envision the Waukegan area in the year 2040.

The four most-innovative projects were honored at the [Waukegan Public Library](#) on May 4, 2009, and all course projects were displayed at the library through June 1, 2009.

The results, dioramas of Waukegan in the future, were geo-located in Google Earth.

B) and C) [Highland Park High School](#)

The VBI worked in two capacities with Highland Park High School, featured in a Google Earth layer.

B) First, the VBI worked in partnership with two Urban Studies courses, taught by Ed Garza and Debbie Castellani. Students studied the *Plan of Chicago* and its implications for development within the entire metropolitan area, preparing projects that analyzed the themes of the *Plan* as applied to select Chicago-area locations. These works are also available on the VBI website.

C) Second, students from John Connolly's Architectural Drafting course designed virtual models for select Chicago structures—including train stations proposed by the *Plan of Chicago* and the First Regiment Armory (from 1552 S. Michigan Ave.—[1891-1967]).

D) Lake Forest High School

LFHS students, under the tutelage of Debra Zare, researched the Plan of Chicago and then created photo essays exploring how the Plan, with its regional focus, affected Lake Forest. This project, part of the Chicago Botanic Garden's [Fairchild Challenge](#), also produced 4 photographs that were chosen for use in the new book *The Plan of Chicago @ 100: 15 Views of Burnham's Legacy for the New Century*, published by the [Lambda Alpha International Ely Chapter](#).

Each school participating in the Fairchild Challenge submitted up to three submissions from their school for the challenge. Two of LFHS's submissions are presented on the VBI—Colleen Dunn and Michael Brandorff; Dunn's work was selected in the top three for the entire competition.

The project helped the students gain a greater appreciation of their community and its resources as well as creating an awareness of the importance of urban planning and its effects on our daily lives. The student photos presented with the VBI are selected from the Lambda Alpha winners and Fairchild Challenge submissions.

4) Additional community outreach: This took place through two strong VBI partners, CMAP and the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University. CMAP invited the VBI project director to speak on several occasions about the legacy of the *Plan*, including an address before their FLIP program (Future Leaders in Planning). Chaddick hosted the [VBI public launch on June 23, 2009 at DePaul University](#), and, in a project not funded by this grant that certainly grew out of its close collaboration, Chaddick Institute Director Joseph P. Schwieterman became the lead author on the Lake Forest College Press book, *Beyond Burnham: An Illustrated History of Planning for the Chicago Region*.

Changes: The VBI proceeded according to its proposal, with several notable exceptions.

- 1) The project substantially exceeded its design goals, greatly expanding its virtual models from the initial proposal.
- 2) Project Co-Director Donnie Sendelbach left Lake Forest College for a position at another institution in fall 2009, at which point the project director duties went solely to Dr. Schneiderman.

Publicity: There was tremendous amount of word-of-mouth publicity for the start-up phase of the VBI, as indicated by the number of partners who signed on for a rejected second round of funding through a proposal for an NEH America's Historical and Cultural Organizations Grant. Additionally, several newspaper and magazine articles (listed here: <http://vbi.lakeforest.edu/press.html>) assisted in dissemination.

Yet, our best method for reaching a large public audience was through the Burnham Plan Centennial and its 2009 festivities. This series of events accrued significant media attention, and the VBI functioned as an officially recognized project of the Burnham Plan Centennial Committee, a designation attained—at first—by a limited number of more than 200 projects operated under the organizational umbrella. Participation in this network allowed the VBI to further connect with the program partners, both participants and users, and provide crucial organizational and publicity support. For instance, the media relations firm of Hill & Knowlton provided press coverage and publicity for the Recognized Program Partners.

Accomplishments:

As detailed above, the VBI met and exceeded its three main goals: 1) to promote an historical understanding of the *Plan* and its legacy, 2) to propose the contemporary application of these ideas to local communities through new media, and 3) to activate critical engagement and critical thinking about historical study and contemporary practice. To best understand this, it is necessary to briefly state the significance of Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett's work, and the *Plan of Chicago's* continue relevance.

The 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, a landmark document in the history of regional planning, offers with considerable interactions with Burnham's other city plans – Cleveland (The Group Plan, 1903), San Francisco (1908), Washington, D.C. (The McMillan Plan, 1901), and Manila/Baguio City, Philippines (1904) – as well as his numerous architectural commissions outside the Chicago region, including the Flatiron Building (Manhattan), Union Station (D.C.), and the Ford Building (Detroit). At the time of Burnham's death in 1912, D.H. Burnham and Co. was the largest architectural firm in the world. The grand scale of the *Plan* emerged from Burnham's success at the helm of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, in Chicago's present-day Jackson Park. During the period of that historic World's Fair, 27 million visitors (14 million from abroad) experienced Burnham's dazzling "White City," perhaps rode the first Ferris Wheel (which carried over 2,100 people at one time), or navigated the Midway Plaisance to discover the "Streets of Cairo" or "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show."

These diverse social elements and the commercial and popular success of the Fair – coupled with Chicago's astounding population growth during this period – convinced the social and business leaders of Chicago to commission the now world-renowned Burnham to produce the 1909 *Plan* as a way to harness the energies of a wildly developing city. By 1910, Chicago's population had increased 20 times from what it was in 1860, to nearly 2.2 million; New York City's, by contrast, grew six-fold. By the time the *Plan* was

written, the population of Chicago exceeded Berlin's (2 million) and was making inroads on Paris's 2.9 million. Spurred on by these masses, Chicago's business leaders, who viewed such centralized planning as a civic duty, produced many of Chicago's most influential cultural institutions.

Burnham and Bennett's vision in the *Plan* consisted of an interconnected system of regional planning predicated on six goals: 1) the improvement of the lake front; 2) the establishment of a concentric roadway system around the city, looping at its largest circle from southern Wisconsin to northern Indiana; 3) the modernization of the railway and transportation systems; 4) the creation of an outer park system and greenbelt circuit connecting the parks; 5) the arrangement of streets, broad avenues, and diagonal arteries atop the Chicago street grid; and 6) the advent of intellectual centers and civic buildings. Some structures from the *Plan* were indeed constructed, while others appear as gloriously un-built remnants of a utopian vision. Through endless boosterism by Chicago's commercial establishment, the *Plan* played a key factor in education and public memory. A distilled version of the *Plan*, titled *Wacker's Manual of the Plan of Chicago*, served as a textbook in Chicago eighth-grade classes from 1912-1924 in the hopes that young Chicagoans would one day respond to the *Plan*'s civic suggestions. Many of the recommendations of the *Plan* are familiar to both life-long Chicagoans as well as the millions of tourists who visit Chicago each year. For example, the once-controversial bridge linking North and South Michigan Avenue (and thus establishing the Magnificent Mile) has become a central feature of the city's economic landscape. Almost 100 years after its initial publication, the *Plan* remains a mainstay of Chicago's public identity and the progenitor of modern American urban and regional planning.

Thus, the transformation of this "city that never was" into the virtual space of Google Earth takes its place in a long chain of planning events culminating the region's renewed sense of purpose for integrated planning. This is why the project pushed so hard to exceed its proposal to only model Grant Park and its landscape. The VBI becomes not only an historical reference point, but also a node of inspiration.

Audiences: The VBI engaged a general public audience, and an audience of college and high school students through work with our program partners. The project attracted, of course, those who are interested in history, urban planning, and American studies, among other topics. However, with its focus on the use of new media, it proved particularly engaging to young people. In addition, the VBI's use of SketchUp and Google Earth allow an incredible degree of interactivity for the general user. Rather than just view information on a standard web page, the general public has the opportunity to really interact with the VBI.

Thus, there is no "average" user profile, just as there is no "average" Chicagoan. Yet, while the digital interface was made as easy as possible to use, the user must of course have access to a computer and Google Earth. Public screenings took place at various sites in Chicago, Lake Forest, Highland Park, Waukegan, and Riverwoods, IL.

Chicago: DePaul University: a mixed audience of approximately 80 persons, spaced in

age, gender, and economic background.

Chicago: American Planning Association: planning professionals audience of approximately 200 persons, mixed gender, aged from 30-60 on average.

Lake Forest and Highland Park: student populations totaling 200, with approximately 60 (college students) spaced geographically across the country. 30 of these, additionally, were CMAP FLIP program high school students drawn from the entire Chicagoland area.

Highland Park: 20 students in a series of four planning workshops and field trips. The students were all Latino or African American, and while this group was the smallest in size of our outreach, our work with this cohort was the most intense and sustained.

Evaluation:

The VBI program was assessed with regard to both formative and summative goals, as outlined in the grant proposal. Summative goals included evaluation of software, curriculum and content preparation, and development of a partner network. These goals were measured through documentation of products produced, surveys of project users and partners, and documentation of time spent on project activities. Formative goals included evaluation of project design, curricular advances, and collaboration with partners. These goals were measured through several means: documentation of projects produced and disseminated, surveys of content users, project partners and curriculum developers, documentation of use in teaching by academic communities, and surveys of project partners and collaborators.

The products created involving implementation of software, curriculum development, and user projects are documented on the VBI website. These include college courses using the project, as explained previously in this report. In addition, evaluation by VBI's high school program partners took place on two occasions: at the start of the partnership in May 2008, and again, at the close of major partner activities in Dec 2009. VBI Assessment Director Rachel Ragland, Chair of the Lake Forest College Assessment Committee, designed both instruments. She administered the first instrument as a program partner meeting in May 2008, and Davis Schneiderman administered the second instrument, electronically, at the close of 2009.

Responses from the high school program partners indicated a high level of satisfaction with participation in the project. Participants surveyed both at the formative and summative stages of the project rated project elements useful or very useful (average overall rating of 3.83 on a 4 point scale) in the following categories: explanation of the project and the role of school district partners; demonstration and use of Google Earth and Sketchup; interaction and communication with VBI team members; and collaboration, planning, and sharing with other VBI cultural and school partners (where applicable).

The high school partners also reported spending from one to two semesters actively using and generating project resources. Students in the high school classes spent from two to nine weeks on culminating projects related to incorporating VBI into their curriculum. School partners surveyed commented that classroom involvement goals were achieved. These included providing “an authentic learning experience related to our own community and [being] part of a larger initiative while improving technical... skills and creativity”; “[helping] to make the history of Chicago come alive for my students by creating an authentic assessment that allowed them to ...analyze Burnham’s work in connection to the City’s Centennial celebration of the 1909 Burnham Plan for Chicago”; and “to have students understand the basic principles in urban planning ... and to have students change their attitudes about their town. This would not have been possible without VBI’s efforts...”

Media response has also been positive, with eight articles (detailed on the “Press Room” section of the VBI site), including pieces in *North Shore* magazine, *Illinois Issues*, and the Chicago Tribune’s architecture blog drawing positive attention to the project.

Continuation of the Project:

The VBI will continue to be hosted at Lake Forest College, and will also be used as a teaching tool in courses. A spring 2009 course, “Second City, Second Nature” allowed students to develop Google Earth modules based upon their semester reading, with the VBI as the central backdrop. Additionally, its vision will be incorporated into several 2010-11 courses, including “Science Fiction and Chicago” and “Chicago and the Literary Environment.”

Further, the robust interface allows for continual access and update of the Google Earth materials, a possibility that can develop in lockstep with Google’s embellishments to the time slider and historical imagery of their interface.

Nonetheless, the project has completed its start-up phase of building the virtual materials and interacting with the public during the centennial year, and there are no immediate plans to continue the project with specific content updates. Further, the grant proposal suggested that the project would later work toward interaction with primary school levels along with additional audiences. A rejected funding application for a different NEH grant proposed these next steps, but with the failure of the proposal to be funded, and the originally unexpected extension of this start-up grant into a second year, the VBI sees its work to have been largely completed.

The VBI laid the ground for new partnerships with Chicago-area cultural and educational institutions (CMAP and Chaddick, particularly, as detailed above), and also strengthened our connections with other area institutions, often through the VBI’s strong placement within the Burnham Centennial network.

Long Term Impact:

Aside from the aforementioned course interactions, the project resulted, indirectly, in two notable side projects:

1) Lake Forest College Press' debut publication, *Beyond Burnham: An Illustrated History of Planning for the Chicago Region*, by Joseph P. Schwieterman and Alan P. Mammoser. Edited with a postscript by John A. Shuler. 100 b/w photographs, 16 color • Paper • ISBN: 978-0-9823156-1-3 • \$19.95

Beyond Burnham provides a fascinating account of a century of visionary planning for metropolitan Chicago. From Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's famed 1909 *Plan of Chicago* to the push for superhighways and airports to battles over urban sprawl, the book showcases an illustrated portrait of the big personalities and the "big plans" they espoused.

The human face of planning appears in the interplay between public officials and citizen advocates. Powerful institutions—the Chicago Plan Commission and Regional Transportation Authority, among others—emerge to promote metropolitan goals. Some efforts succeed while others fail, but the work of planners lives on in efforts to shape new visions for the region's future.

2) The estate of Edward H. Bennett, partially on the strength of the VBI, donated a large cache of Bennett family historical materials to the Special Collections department at Lake Forest College, as the Collection of Marcia O. and Edward H. Bennett III (<http://library.lakeforest.edu/archives/edwardbennett.html>). This collection offers significant new information on the *Plan of Chicago*, including workbooks, sketches, and an amazing set of photos taken by Bennett of Grant Park during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The VBI additionally strengthened public perception of Lake Forest College as a steward of the community and an innovator in digital programs. The VBI, *Beyond Burnham*, and Bennett collection worked in tandem to re-integrate the College into discussions in Chicago proper regarding the complex legacy of the *Plan of Chicago* and the interaction between city and suburbs.

Grant Products:

The primary grant products were the VBI website and virtual models, all housed and backed-up by Lake Forest College. This site will remain the locus for new research on these topics.

3. APPENDICES

- One copy of *Beyond Burnham* book.
- Course syllabus for Second City, Second Nature (Fall 2009, Lake Forest College).
- Publicity folder.